

Last week's heavy downpours resulted in widespread flash flooding along Alabama's southern border. Rainfall topped 12 inches in many areas, swamping communities across southwest Alabama. Particularly hard hit was Escambia County, which suffered heavy flooding in Atmore, Flomaton, Brewton and East Brewton. Local and national news reports showed submerged businesses in Brewton resembling the aftermath of tropical storms. By late last week, the flood waters were receding, but the damage to property was still being assessed.

The day after the flooding, Governor Riley declared a "State of Emergency" in Covington, Crenshaw, Dale and Escambia counties, setting in motion the process for rendering assistance to flood-impacted communities. While I was voting in Washington during the storm, my staff visited flooded areas in Escambia County, and we are remaining in touch with local officials. I am also working with the Governor's office in support of his efforts to secure and provide state and federal disaster assistance.

Son of Stimulus:

Making good on the Obama administration's promise to expand the scope and expense of its unsuccessful stimulus program, last Wednesday the House Democrat leadership passed a new spending bill that has been dubbed by conservatives as the "Son of Stimulus." The new spending bill adds another \$150 billion to the mammoth \$787 billion stimulus package which has failed to deliver significant job growth.

Just like the stimulus which passed last February, the second stimulus bill was brought to the House floor without adequate time for lawmakers or the public to carefully review its details. This lack of sufficient prior disclosure has been a disturbing pattern with Speaker Nancy Pelosi's House. It's ironic that the Obama administration pledged openness and transparency in governing, yet many of their major bills have been withheld from public scrutiny until the eve or day of a vote.

I voted against the first stimulus in February and, last week, I also opposed the second stimulus bill which narrowly passed the House by a thin five vote margin. Both bills add to the federal budget deficit without providing assurances they will invigorate the economy or jump-start employment.

The second stimulus also follows through on the president's plan to redirect unused or repaid money from the Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP) into stimulus programs. Under "Son of Stimulus," some \$75 billion in TARP funds will be rerouted to the administration's spending projects. I believe these TARP funds should go to pay down the budget deficit. Unfortunately, this pattern of "throwing good money after bad" has been a consistent policy with this administration and Congress.

Washington State vs. Alabama:

No, I'm not talking about a switch in the BCS National Championship line-up. Rather, I'm referring to the latest salvo in the battle of words between Alabama and Washington State in the war to win the Air Force's much-coveted \$40 billion aerial refueling tanker contract.

During a recent interview about the status of the tanker competition, Washington Senator Patty Murray told a reporter for National Public Radio "I have stood on the line in Everett, Washington, where we have thousands of workers who go to work every day to build these planes. I would challenge anybody to tell me they've stood on a line in Alabama and seen anybody building anything."

Senator Murray can boast all she wants about the skills of her home state workers, but she clearly stepped out of bounds when she singled out the people of Alabama for such an obviously uninformed and poorly chosen comment.

She follows in the footsteps of a Boeing vice president who said, in late 2007, that building the new aerial tanker in Alabama is like "being in the living room on Christmas morning, surrounded by boxes, and you're trying to put a tricycle together for the first time."

Her challenge was readily accepted by politicians, editorial writers and workers across the state who took little time in firing back. While we might not yet have anything to compete with Seattle's Starbucks, Alabama can boast a pretty impressive industrial track record.

Here in southwest Alabama, Austal USA is building the world's most advanced littoral combat ships for the Navy. In Pike County, Lockheed Martin workers are assembling some of the most sophisticated missiles which are used to fight the war on terror. North Alabama is home to Boeing assembly lines for Delta rockets. And high tech auto manufacturing plants and their major suppliers dot the landscape of our state.

To our friends in Washington State, I am more than confident that Alabamians will have no difficulty assembling a tricycle this Christmas morning or the new KC-X tanker, for that matter.

My staff and I work for you. If we can ever be of service, do not hesitate to call my office toll free at 1-800-288-8721.